DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 419 EC 304 813

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TITLE Do Social Skills Programs Accommodate Cultural Diversity? A Review of Secondary Curricula.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (74th, Orlando, FL, April 1-5, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Problems; *Cultural Differences; *Curriculum Evaluation; Educational Practices; *Interpersonal Competence; *Learning Problems; *Multicultural Education; Secondary Education; Skill Development
IDENTIFIERS Diversity (Student)

ABSTRACT

This review examined the extent to which commercially available social skills curricula designed for adolescent populations (including those with learning and behavior problems) accommodate cultural diversity. Introductory material discusses the need for culturally responsive teaching in social skills training. The study reviewed 11 curricula, and tables present a summary of each program and a comparison of the programs relative to 23 evaluative questions concerning culturally responsive teaching. The paper concludes that most commercially available social skills curricula for use with this population do not include many of the procedures considered to be important components of culturally responsive teaching. (Contains 55 references.) (DB)

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ED 395 419

Do Social Skills Programs Accomodate Cultural Diversity? A Review of Secondary Curricula

Paper presented at the 74th Annual Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children Orlando, Florida

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"Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can provide for our children."

Sitting Bull of the Hunkpapa Lakota (from Monette, 1995)

Many adolescents with learning and behavior problems exhibit social skills deficits that have a detrimental effect on their ability to be successful in mainstream environments (McLeod, Kolb, & Lister, 1994; Salend & Salend, 1986). Since many adolescents are, or will be shortly, entering the job market, the relationship between deficits in social skills, unemployment, and poor job performance (Elksnin & Elksnin,1991) suggests that social skills training should be an important part of these students' secondary education programs.

Social competence, or an individual's ability to engage in appropriate social behaviors at the right time and place (Kerr & Nelson, 1989),is influenced by a number of factors. One variable that affects the manner in which students "socialize" is the culture or cultures to which they belong (Banks, 1989). As school environments become increasingly more culturally diverse, it would appear to be important for social skills curricula to account for this. Therefore, the purpose of this review was to determine the extent to which commercially available social skills curricula designed for adolescent populations accommodate cultural diversity. This review is part of a larger project that has been designed to develop and validate culturally responsive social skills training for secondary students.

Why The Need For Culturally Responsive Teaching in Social Skills Training?

By the year 2000, 40% of the school population will be from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds other than Anglo-American (ATE, 1991). Ninety-two percent of the teachers in the United States are white and middle-class, and this imbalance is expected to continue (ATE, 1991). In light of these statistics, it is alarming that teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare pre-service candidates to teach in culturally diverse classrooms (Birrell, 1993, 1995; Buttery, Haberman, & Houston, 1990; Larke, Wiseman, & Bradley, 1990; Zeicher, 1993)) and do little to attract teacher candidates from culturally diverse backgrounds (Hodge, 1990). American education is still primarily based on Anglo-Saxon norms (Ghasarian, 1995) and stresses a consensus model that is deeply rooted in a continual drive towards national educational goals and curriculum standards (Bintz, 1995).

The cultures to which students belong greatly influence what students value and why they value those things. Those values, in turn, affect students' motivation to learn, or incorporate certain skills and information into their repertoire (Bintz, 1995), and serve as the basis for how students derive meaning from what they are exposed to in the classroom (Trueba, 1989). Teachers who are not sensitive to these differences tend to misinterpret behaviors that are a function of a student's cultural background, and failure to accommodate these differences can adversely affect a student's ability to learn and adjust (Hall, 1989; Hollins, 1995; Ogbu, 1990,1992).

This becomes particularly problematic when addressing the issue of social skills. The practices, beliefs, and values that students are exposed to in their home culture affect the content of the spoken interaction as well as the non-verbal nuances of social interactions

(Matsumoto, 1991; Pitton, Warring, Frank, & Hunter, 1993; O'Hair & Ropo, 1994). By the time students reach adolescence, they have learned, and practiced, and have a long reinforcement history for using the social skills that are acceptable in their "home" culture. Adolescents are also dealing with developmental issues related to increased peer pressure and the increasing responsibilities of independence, and those who don't develop the coping skills to address these stressors are more likely to develop serious emotional and behavioral problems (Compass, 1987; Copeland & Hess, 1995). When all of these issues collide in the classroom, the mismatch between what is deemed acceptable by teachers and what is acceptable at home creates considerable conflict (Damico & Damico, 1993). For instance:

* In many Arabic cultures, it is acceptable to stare at someone if you find them interesting and if you want to learn more about them - a behavior that would be considered rude in most classrooms (Damico & Hamayan, 1993).

* In Native American, African-American, and Asian cultures, eye-contact may be considered disrespectful towards new acquaintances or persons in authority (Damico & Damico, 1993) and yet this behavior is included and taught in most social skills curricula.

* Asian cultures avoid direct confrontation of any kind, but this behavior in an American classroom might be misconstrued as overly passive and in need of assertiveness training (Young, 1982).

* The "O.K." hand sign is considered obscene in Latin-American cultures (O'Hair & Ropo, 1994).

* Standing close in front of a person and speaking very loud is a sign of strength and sincerity in Arabic cultures, but would probably be viewed as rude and obnoxious by many American teacher (O'Hair & Ropo, 1994).

* Native American children do not smile automatically when smiled at the way many Anglo children do because facial expressions that convey emotion are not the cultural norm. (Pitton, Warring, Frank, & Hunter, 1993).

* Japanese children are taught to focus on the speakers neck (Bond & Komai, 1976).

* To a Thai student, a foot pointed towards them would be considered extremely offensive, while many people from other cultures are comfortable sitting with one leg propped across their other knee and their foot elevated and probably pointed in someone's direction (Smutkupt, & Barna, 1976).

* Individuals from Hispanic cultures stand much closer to people than Anglos, and this might be construed as a violation of personal space (Argyle, 1988).

* Many Native American cultures emphasize non-competitiveness and communal spirit - winning is not valued, and a student who refuses to do their best to win may be considered weak or even non-compliant. Their "cultural learning style is focused, persistent observation and private self-testing. Public mistakes are considered shameful and many Native American students will not participate or respond unless they are sure of their correctness (Safran, Safran, & Pirozak, 1994).

Social skills are important "tools" for establishing one's identity (Damico & Damico, 1993). Although the topography of the social skills that students from diverse cultural backgrounds bring to the classroom may look different, the underlying goals are the same - to fit in, be accepted, and successfully negotiate through the wide variety of social interactions and stressors they encounter. The key for teachers who deliver social skills instruction in culturally diverse classrooms is to recognize and make accommodations for these difference in topography, and several models of culturally responsive teaching offer teachers methods and strategies for making these adjustments to their curriculum and instruction.

A Comparison of Culturally Responsive Teaching Methodology With Commercially Available Social Skills Curricula

Culturally responsive teaching is "a pedagogy that crosses disciplines and cultures to engage learners while respecting their cultural integrity" (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 17). It is constructivist in nature in that, although the goal of instruction is the same for all

students, how they get there, i.e., how they frame and integrate what is presented is subjective, value-laden, and unique to each student (Cannella & Reiff, 1994). Several models of culturally responsive teaching and guidelines for adapting curriculum have been reported in the literature (Butt & Pahnos, 1995; Gay, 1988; Gersten, Brengelman, & Jimenez, 1994; Jackson, 1993/1994; Hollins, 1995; Hyan & Fowler, 1995; Maddox & Vadasy, 1995), Matiella, 1991; Pahnos & Butt, 1994; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Table 1 includes a list of questions that reflects a synthesis of the components of these models, and served as the method of analyzing the cultural responsiveness of commercially available social skills curricula for adolescent students.

Commercially available social skills curricula were reviewed, and thirteen were found that addressed adolescent populations. A summary of each program is presented in Table 2. These curricula were then analyzed by comparing their content to the 23 questions included in Table 1. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Conclusions

"What we must keep in mind is that written curriculum is merely a framework that we follow to guide us through content, but the true test of a multicultural curriculum is how it is carried out by the teachers and the students. "

Butt & Pahnos, 1995, p. 49

The results of this review indicate that most commercially available social skills curricula that have been developed for use with adolescent students do not include many of the procedures considered to be important components of culturally responsive teaching. While most of the the eleven curricula that were analyzed included components that are considered to be important for effective social skills instruction (Kerr & Nelson, 1989) such as teaching

students to use self-assessment techniques and providing positive and non-punitive corrective feedback about their performance (see # 14, #20, and #21 on Table 1), Tribes (Gibbs, 1995) was the only curriculum that contained most of the components listed in Table 1 (see Table 3). However, this curriculum has not been empirically validated as effective for students with social skills deficits that seriously affect their performance.

The results of this review suggest that further studies need to be conducted to:

1. determine the extent to which the Tribes (Gibbs, 1995) curriculum is effective in remediating social skills deficits of adolescent students.
2. determine the relative effects of the twenty-three components included in Table 2 on the effectiveness of social skills training with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
3. develop and validate procedures for making commonly used commercial curricula more culturally responsive.

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Table 1

Questions Reflecting Important Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Does the curriculum:

1. include procedures for or encourage teachers to create an operational definition of culture for use during teaching?

2. include procedures for or encourage teachers to develop a knowledge of their own cultural practices, beliefs, and values?

3. include procedures for or encourage teachers to learn about the practices, beliefs, and values of each students' home culture(s)?

4. include procedures for or encourage teachers to examine the similarities and differences between students' social interactions in the classroom and in their home culture(s)?

5. include procedures for or encourage teachers to consider the effects of the local community political and social structure on the practices, beliefs, and values of each student's cultural practices, beliefs, and values?

6. include procedures for or encourage teachers to consider the effects of societal laws and values on the practices, beliefs, and values of each student's cultural practices, beliefs, and values?

7. include procedures for or encourage teachers to their beliefs about their students and whether their cultural beliefs favor one or some cultures over others?

8. include procedures for or encourage teachers to examine their beliefs about instruction and current teaching style, and whether they favor one or some cultures or others?

9. include procedures for or encourage teachers to examine students' prior experiences (both in and out of school) that may have been differentially affected by their cultural practices, beliefs, and values?

10. include procedures or activities that are likely to establish trust and respect among all participants, such as focus groups that allow students and teachers to share information about their cultural practices, beliefs, and values?

11. provide guidelines for adapting materials and activities so that instruction is culturally relevant and meaningful for all students?

12. include guidelines or procedures for using instructional styles that match students' individual and cultural learning styles?

13. include guidelines or procedures for using evaluation procedures that match students' individual and cultural learning styles?

Table 1 (continued)

14. include procedures for teaching students to use self-assessment and reflection techniques?

15. include activities that require higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, i.e., responses that require the application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of information?

16. question stereotyping individuals based on their home culture(s)?

17. address bias, prejudice, and discrimination?

18. teacher social participation skills?

19. teacher conflict resolution skills?

20. include procedures for providing students with positive feedback about their performance?

21. include procedures for providing students with non-punitive corrective feedback about their performance?

22. encourage an active home/school partnership?

23. include procedures for or encourage teachers to elicit feedback from leaders in the students' cultural community as to the cultural relevance of curriculum goals, materials, and activities?

Table 2
Characteristics of Commercially Available Social Skills Curricula for Adolescents

CURRICULUM	DESCRIPTION
ACCESS (Walker, Todis Holmes, & Horton, 1988)	Direct Instructions: scripted presentation of lesson, role playing of minimally different examples, discrimination practice, behavioral rehearsal with feedback, contracting, self-correction & evaluation procedures; 31 peer-related, adult-related, and self-related social skills.
ASSET (Hazel, Schumaker, Sherman, & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1981)	Nine step sequence including review, skill description, rationale for skill,example situations, modeling, verbal rehearsal & criterion performance, and homework. Eight skills: giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, problem solving, negotiating, following instructions, conversation.
EQUIP (Gibbs, Potter, & Goldstien, 1995)	Students participate in two types of group sessions: Equipment Meetings in which the facilitator teaches specific skills that are demonstrated, discussed and practiced, and Mutual Help Meetings in which the facilitator coaches students to use the skills to help one another. Areas of skills development are: strategies for making moral judgements, anger management techniques, cognitive strategies for correcting thinking errors, and prosocial skills.
Getting Along with Others (Jackson, Jackson, & Monroe, 1983)	Six teaching strategies: positive feedback, ignore-attend-praise, teacher interaction, direct prompt, sit & watch, relaxation training Seventeen skills, including joining a conversation, saying "no" to stay out of trouble, problem solving, & sending an ignoring message.

Pacemaker Communication Skills Series (Lefkowitz, 1989)	Designed for special needs and ESL students who have problems getting along with others. The program consists of three high interest, low reading level (2.8) books: Let's Have A Talk (including initiating a social conversation, keeping a conversation going, giving constructive criticism, saying no to peer pressure), Give Me A Call (including taking down phone messages and handling difficult calls), and Write Me A Note (including writing a thank you note and adding a personal message to a card). Emphasizes role playing and practice exercises.
Skillstreaming the Adolescent (Goldstein, Sprafkin, Gershaw, & Klein, 1980)	Structured learning: *modeling *role-playing *performance feedback *transfer of training 50 social skills categorized as beginning social skills, advanced social skills, skills for dealing with feelings, skill alternatives to aggression, skills for dealing with stress, planning skills.
Social Skills for Daily Living (Schumaker, Hazel, & Pederson, 1988)	Procedures include skill awareness, skill practice, and skill application. Thirty social skills are taught in four clusters: Body Basics (e.g., maintaining eye contact), Conversation & Friendship Skills (e.g., making friends), Skills for Getting Along with Others (e.g., accepting thanks), Problem-Solving Skills (e.g., giving rationales).
SCIL: Systematic Curriculum for Independent Living (Hannah, 1983)	Designed for adolescent and adult learning disabled individuals. Diagnostic-prescriptive program including independent-skills areas such as Social Skills, Personal Care, Community Living, and Skills for the Workplace. Each subject area is presented in a series of discrete sequential steps and includes target behaviors, behavioral objectives, and lesson plans that include role play and practice activities.

Teaching Social Skills to Youth (Dowd & Tierney, 1992)	Includes 182 social skills such as Making Positive Statements About Others, Dealing With Embarrassing Situations, Greeting Others, and Asking For Advice. Planned Teaching Sequence includes introducing the skills, giving examples, demonstrating skills components, providing a rationale, requesting acknowledgement from the student, practice/role play and feedback, discussing positive consequences, and prompting future practice. A structured procedure for providing corrective feedback to students when an inappropriate social behavior occurs.
The Prepare Curriculum (Goldstein, 1988)	Structured learning (modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and transfer training). Prosocial skills representing 10 curricular areas: problem-solving, interpersonal skills, situational perception, anger control, moral reasoning, stress management, empathy, understanding & using groups.
Tribes (Gibbs, 1995)	Provides K-12 teachers with activities and strategies for teaching individual and group interactions skills through cooperative learning experiences. Includes 267 activities that focus on presenting self (self-esteem), social interaction skills, problem solving skills, conflict resolution, and goal setting.

Table 3

Relationship Between Components of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Commercially Available Social Skills Curricula for Adolescent Populations

Social Skills Curricula	Numbers Corresponding To The Questions In Table 2																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
ACCESS														X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
ASSET															X			X	X	X	X	X	
EQUIP										X				X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
Getting Along With Others							X	X						X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
Pacemaker Communication Skills Series				X										X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
Skillstreaming the Adolescent										X				X	X			X	X	X	X		
Social Skills for Daily Living														X	X			X	X	X	X		
SCIL: Systematic Curriculum for Independent Living																		X	X	X	X		
Teaching Social Skills to Youth														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
The Prepare Curriculum				X	X	X				X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Tribes		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X